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In an attempt to determine whether a 2-year open-door institution known for its services to the academically weak would be suitable for academically superior students, the Instructional Council of Skagit Valley College requested comment from interested faculty, and polled "better" (GPA 3.0 or higher) students to determine their degree of satisfaction with available programs. Faculty suggestions include: (1) enrichment programs for "better" students; (2) special grouping; (3) environmental improvement and increased informal faculty contact with "better" students; and (4) changes in course requirements, orientation, and grading. Students indicated that they found classes intellectually stimulating, and appear well adjusted except in the area of finding friends with similar interests. Few seemed active in currently available enrichment programs (a list is appended), but all participated in some activities and individual conversations with instructors. The council recommend further exploration of this topic. (MC)

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SKAGIT VALLEY COLLEGE
Mount Vernon, Washington

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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TO: Instructional Council

FROM: Gerald Jordheim and Fern Leopold

SUBJECT: Committee report - The "Better" Student

Skagit Valley College, a two-year community college, maintains an open-door admissions policy, is known by and advertises the services it offers to the academically weak. All high school graduates are accepted for admission right up until the opening of the term and most who have dropped from a four-year college are admitted with no waiting time. The predicted all-college gpa was 1.79 for the average entering student in the fall of 1965 with the median rank in the graduating class at the 45%tile.

The College offers remedial courses in reading, English, mathematics, study skills, and conducts a high school completion program. Students who are unsuccessful in the transfer program may take a technical course or continue below a 2.0 average and complete a diploma rather than a degree.

Knowing this, it is understandable that an academically superior student would wonder if he would be suited to this College, especially when financial aids are readily available and a respected four-year college is within communting distance.

The subject to be dealt with in this paper is, "The Better Student at SVC." What are the advantages currently available and what other areas might be developed?

METHOD

A definition of and a review of the data concerning the "better" students was made using the Pre-College test scores and College achievement. Non-empirical analysis of programs currently available which are of special interest to the better students was completed. Faculty members and the better students were surveyed for suggestions and reactions.

"Better" was defined as those students who achieved a cumulative gpa of 3.0 while attending SVC as full-time students for more than one quarter. Of the 1126 day students enrolled at the end of winter quarter 1966, 80 had 3.0 cumulative. Of these, 71 met the above criteria and were polled. A second group was created from the 430 grade prediction results available on the 1965 entering freshman class. The top 5 and 10% were selected, using the predicted all-college gpa as the criteria. Although there was considerable over-lap, it was possible to differentiate achievers and underachievers. Further development of this theme is part of another study which includes a study showing relationship between counseling contacts/predicted grades/achieved grades.

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The committee preparing this paper consulted individual faculty members in an attempt to determine which programs currently in progress would be of special interest to the "Better" student. 13 categories were developed with other more border-line areas not included.

A request for comment from the faculty resulted in a 15% return. The structure of the questionnaire was such that only those with strong feelings on the subject were encouraged to answer. A poll was not taken.

RESULTS

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE. The most common reason given for choosing SVC, an almost unanimous choice, was low cost. Second most frequent was the opportunity to work while attending and third, and of importance to less than half, was closeness to home. Areas which played the least part in making their decision to attend were: social life, best friends attending, athletics, parents' request, and extra-curricular activities. Lost in the middle were reasons which we consider to be more important such as reputation of the school, and superior teaching. Reasons for attending were apparently not of a positive nature.

While attending, most found classes were intellectually stimulating and good adjustment/enjoyment was indicated by all but one. The area of adjustment which was not rated high was that of finding friends with similar interests. Although apparently not having a very high opinion of the College when enrolling, they apparently are generally content. When asked about independent study groups and honors programs, an almost perfect balance between yes, no and maybe was found.

Although there is no group to compare them with, few appeared to be active in those programs listed under programs currently available. They all had some or much participation in activities, individual conversations with instructors and attendance at Lyceum. The other nine areas were checked as some or none.

The apparent contentment by those responding may be indicative of the group surveyed. Contrasting these statements with those who were tested high but have not achieved may give a different profile.

DISCUSSION

The problem seems to have three sides. First, the strengthening and creating of programs which better educate the brighter student. Second, the changing of our image in the eyes of the community. Third, the encouragement of participation in available programs.

An obvious solution to the broadening of experiences is the addition of homogeneous grouping. Were we to take the top 100 students out of our proposed 1400 fall's enrollment, we would have probably selected every "A" and "B" average student. What would be the result on the other already skewed classes?

Contact and competition between the better students is important, however. Interviews with students who have transferred to the University of Washington spoke of the difficulty in re-adjusting to a situation of being average rather than being best. A "B" student at SVC is outstanding whereas a "B" student at U of W is average. A first goal when considering new programs is to provide contact between better students yet not de-salt the regular program.

There are disadvantages in attending a small college in a rural area. Fewer courses are offered from a less varied staff. Contact with foreign students, intellectual urbanites, National Merit winners, and the whole explosively exciting world of the city is severely limited. When considering new programs, another goal should be diversity of experiences yet specialization of interest.

A third consideration should be practicality. New programs flow from federal printing presses down the levels to the mimeographed flyers of our own institution. Perhaps emphasis should be placed on further evaluation of our ongoing program and then consider what new load should be added.

Assuming that programs for the better students are functioning, an internal public relations effort needs to be made to encourage the participation of students already enrolled. The publishing of materials which indicate the College's ability to give a rich experience to better students and the verbalization of this capacity by the College staff and representatives should aid in the changing of our image.

This committee recommends that this topic be explored by the College during the workshop period during the fall of 1966.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

FEB 24 1969

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FACULTY SUGGESTIONS. Faculty comments were integrated and grouped into four areas. Two specific examples, one of independent work and the other of a special class are included in order to more clearly illustrate programs. These are not necessarily recommended nor complete.

Meeting Needs of "Better" Students

A. Enrichment plans

1. More difficult study material

2. Stress upon skills of investigation
   a. Communications 102 Honors Section with original research
   b. Library seminar in research for various disciplines

3. More extensive reading materials
   a. Library seminars with independent reading around abstract topics (love, socialism, beauty, justice, etc.) led by professor or librarian guiding with GREAT BOOKS SYNTOPICAN.

4. Independent work with a tutorial instructor
   a. One credit honors in field. Work with individual instructor on research project.
   b. Special problem program - student signs up with the instructor of his choice to work with him on a special project that would interest the student. This could be 1,2,or 3 credits. The student works independently at times but most of the time during a regular lab hour so the instructor is always available.
      1. -Research in a new field
         casting
         glass blowing
         stainglass
         window and store display - (training in stores)
         interior decorating - team with instructor - homes in the community
      2. Prepare a program for adult education - demonstrations and display - booking for classes and community.
         block printing
         crafts
         silk screening
      3. Student could develop a lecture slide report get material - take slides - prepare guide.
      4. Gather material and information for an art display.

5. Emphasis upon critical thinking

B. Grouping plans

1. Special classes

a. One lecture-seminar a week combining chemistry, biology and physics led by Ford-Green-Pierce, at 200 level, beyond our curricular offerings.

b. Small round table discussions on design or art appreciation - not over eight students and instructor.

book review may be
film review may be

c. An "Honors" seminar which meets once every two weeks (?) with some of our thought-provoking instructors leading the seminars on various topics - perhaps it could carry sophomore credit after we get it rolling - in fact this might develop into a regular three credit course/per quarter for three quarters in the sophomore year.

d. The English Department has been considering a "track" type program which might help the over all situation.

2. Clubs for majors

3. Honors sections and labs

a. English 102 (honors section) prerequisite to other independent study plans.

C. Informal - environmental plans

1. Provide a separate room for study and consultation, relaxation and conversation for these pepole which is also open to faculty members.

2. Luncheon seminars

3. Faculty take these students to coffee hour mixers.

4. Faculty take compatible students to art shows, discussions, home for dinner (funds available for paying students' tabs?) Provide them with books and discussions.

D. Course requirements, orientation, grading

1. Remove restrictions on courses they can take for commencement.

2. Allow them to take one course/quarter without counting the grade in their GPA - a pass/fail grade.

3. Orientation and guidance. An orientation program for students who plan to transfer to the U. of W. or similar institutions wherein statistics of their chances are presented and the competition factor is stressed, etc. (this bears somewhat on this problem)

SKAGIT VALLEY COLLEGE
Mount Vernon, Washington

ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES CURRENTLY AVAILABLE.

1.	Work Grants	Students gain intimate knowledge of particular departments in which they might major: lab assistants, library, secretarial, art, etc.
2.	Advanced Placement	Advanced high school courses may be given college credit acceptable by SVC and other degree granting institutions.
3.	Credit Overload	Hours above the normal 16 units may be taken by better students.
4.	Phi Theta Kappa	National Honor society recognizes high scholastic performance.
5.	Publications	Positions of great responsibility are open to lower division students, many giving financial grants, for work on the college paper, yearbook, and literary magazines.
6.	Student Government	Class, as well as student body offices, offer responsibility in governing, handling better than $50,000 a year. All interested students are utilized whether in an elective or appointed office.
7.	Activities	Enrichment encouraged through special interest and ability activities including athletics, drama, music, and clubs.
8.	Faculty Availability	Smaller classes and accessible instructors encourage private interchanges between student and faculty.
9.	Lyceum	Nationally known speakers, art films, and performers present fifteen programs each year.
10.	Forums	Local citizens, faculty members, and students engage in well attended two-way discussions on topics of current interest.
11.	Volunteer Work	Formal pre-professional contacts in education, social work, physical education, and psychology, generally reserved only for upper division and graduate students, is encouraged through college-sponsored work at local schools, Indian Reservation, Northern State Hospital, and various county agencies.
12.	Library	Listen to plays on records, view art slides, read special magazines and national or foreign newspapers at the library where one can explore academic and personal interests.
13.	Scholarships/Awards	College sponsored financial and honorary awards recognize outstanding contributions.